

## **Gardner Family Immigration: Ireland-South Carolina-Indiana**

Research question: I've learned that my Gardner family ancestors Scotch-Irish Presbyterian "Covenanters"? What is the meaning of that term and how did this extended family end up in Southern Indiana?

Surnames: Gardner, Weir, McCullough, McKnight

Locations: Ireland, South Carolina, Indiana

Time frame: Late 1700s/early 1800s to present

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### **Scotch-Irish (*aka* Ulster Scots and Scottish Presbyterians)**

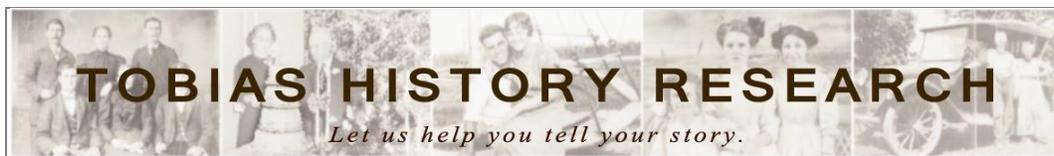
These terms synonymously refer to Presbyterian Scots who settled in Ulster (modern-day Northern Ireland) during the seventeenth century. It is strictly a 19th century American description. The term originated to distinguish the early settlers, which were predominantly Scottish Presbyterians, many of whom lived for a time in Ireland before coming to America, from the later arrivals of Irishmen who were mostly Catholics. The name was coined to differentiate the two distinctly different groups of Irish settlers to America. From these 200,000 Scotch-Irish Presbyterian settlers in Northern Ireland, up to 2 million of their descendants eventually reached North America.

James I of England (James V of Scotland) was a staunch Presbyterian. It was his desire to settle English and Scottish Protestants in Ireland to help "tame" the country. From 1608 to 1697, 200,000 settlers, mostly Lowland Scots, emigrated to Northern Ireland (Ulster) to flee religious persecution and formed plantations (of people). The Irish Catholics were not, naturally enough, delighted with the situation and hostilities soon erupted. Those hostilities are the basis of the Catholic-Protestant problems that continue in Northern Ireland to this day.

### **Scotch-Irish Surnames**

Three main Gardner family branches are Ulster Scots from County Antrim; Gardner, Weir, and McCullough. A fourth, the McKnights, were Ulster Scots from County Down. They all immigrated to America between 1770 and 1800. Whether these families were acquainted in Ireland remains to be proven. All four families were Scotch-Irish Presbyterian "Covenanters" (*see definition below*).

Through similar circumstances, the Gardners, Weirs and McCulloughs ended up in Chester County, South Carolina for a period of time from the late 1700s to the early 1800s and eventually migrated to Washington and Scott Counties, Indiana. The McKnights settled first in York County, Pennsylvania, then Brooke County, Virginia (now West Virginia), then Henry County Kentucky and



finally, Washington County, Indiana. All four families settled in (old) Franklin Township or New Philadelphia in Washington County, approximately 6 miles northeast of Salem (county seat).

### **Family Connections**

The earliest Gardner family to arrive in America consisted of (head) James T., (wife) Margaret, (dau) Margaret, (dau) Sarah, (son) George, (dau) Mary, and (son) James. While in South Carolina, the three Gardner daughters married Weir brothers, sons of the first Weir family to settle in America. (son) George married a McKnight and

(son) James married a McCullough. Subsequent generations of Gardners, Weirs, McCulloughs and McKnights intermarried and settled in Washington and Scott Counties, Indiana.

### **Religious Dissenters - Seceders and Covenanters**

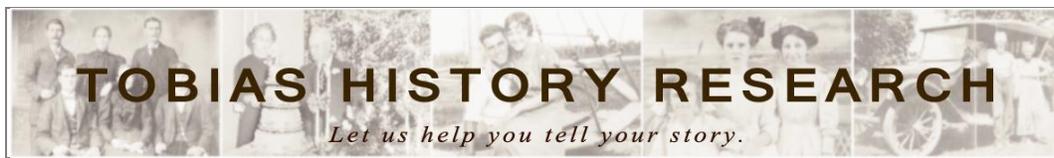
Throughout my research, I have found several references to James T. and (son) George Gardner as “Covenanters”. I have also seen documents referring to George as a “Seceder”. The Weirs and McKnights were well-documented “Covenanters”.

### **Seceders**

Scottish Presbyterian dissenters who established congregations, presbyteries, and synods in Ireland in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. They had seceded from the Church of Scotland in 1733, ostensibly on the issue of lay patronage, but essentially because they were unhappy with the Williamite church settlement in Scotland and the increasingly liberal or “Moderatist” theology of the Church of Scotland.

In Ulster, they provided an alternative to the non-subscribing, New Light Synod of Ulster and between 1746, when their first congregation formed at Lylehill in County Antrim, and 1840, when they united with the Synod of Ulster to form the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, they established 144 congregations.

In Scotland the Seceders were divided in 1747 over the propriety of taking a burgess oath to uphold “the true religion presently professed within this realm”. This division was reproduced in Ireland, where such oaths were unknown, but in 1818 Irish Seceders reunited to form a single Secession Synod. The withdrawal of the Remonstrants from the Synod of Ulster in 1830 and the synod’s subsequent restoration of obligatory subscription led to the



union of the Synod of Ulster and the Secession Synod to form the General Assembly.

### **Covenanters or Reformed Presbyterians**

Like the Seceders, these were Scottish Presbyterian dissenters who established a presence in Ireland in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. They are called Covenanters because of their adherence to the Scottish National Covenant of 1638 and the Solemn League and Covenant of 1643.

The latter pledged Scotland and England to extirpate prelacy and popery and reform the churches in “these kingdoms”, “according to the Word of God and the example of the best reformed churches”. The Williamite church settlement in Scotland in 1690, while establishing Presbyterianism there, had not implemented the Covenant in full, and this and the growing liberalism of the Scottish church led the Covenanters to secede, constituting themselves a presbytery in 1743. Their first congregation in Ulster was formed at the Vow, near Ballmoney, in 1757.

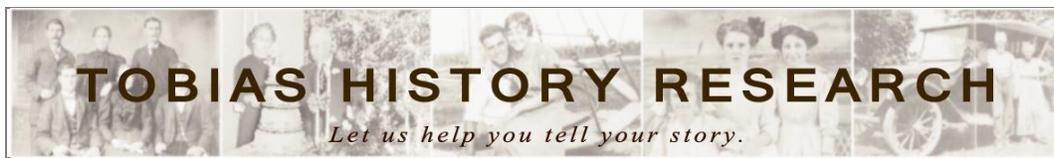
Unlike the Seceders the Covenanters, who never accepted *regium donum* from a uncovenanted government, have remained outside the Irish Presbyterian church. They sing psalms exclusively without instrumental accompaniment and today, have 35 congregations and 3000 church members, six overseas missionaries, and sister churches in Britain, Australia, Canada, Japan, and the United States.

### **The Weirs Were Hunted For Their Affiliation**

James Weir (4 or 5 generations before the Weirs that immigrated to South Carolina) was proclaimed by King Charles II, October 8, 1681, in the following language:

*“Charles, by the grace of God, King of Great Britain, France, Ireland, Defender of the Faith, to our lovits greetings, for as much as the persons under-written are by decree of the lords Commissioners of the judiciary, forfeited in their lives, lands, and goods, for their treasonable rising in arms in the late rebellion at Bothwell bridge, viz, James Weir of Lesmahag, Lanarkshire (and others). We hereby give and grant full power, authority and commission to pursue, take, apprehend, imprison, the foresaid rebels and traitors wherever they can be found, and in case of resistance, to pursue them to death by force of arms or drive them forth, etc. (A Covenanter). Given under our signet at Holyrood, the eighth day of October, 1681, and of our reign the 33<sup>rd</sup> year. Signed, The King.”*

In 1684, a milder proclamation was issued against the Weirs of Lesmahag, Lanarkshire. James Weir (the younger), Thomas Weir (brother of James the younger), Gavin Weir, Adam Weir, and others. They were charged with being



active Covenanters. Soldiers of the King were stationed in Blackwood Manor in 1684, the home of the Weir family. The Weirs fled from the persecutions of Claverhouse to the north of Ireland. Their property having been confiscated and they hunted out of Scotland, they took refuge in County Antrim, Ireland, known as the “shelter of the hunted Covenanters”.

### **Why Journey to America**

During the reign of King Charles I, the protectorship of Oliver Cromwell and the reigns of both Charles II and James II, the Scots, both in Ireland and in Scotland, had troubles

with the English government. The Church of England was built around a system of bishops, but the Presbyterian church believed bishops were unnecessary.

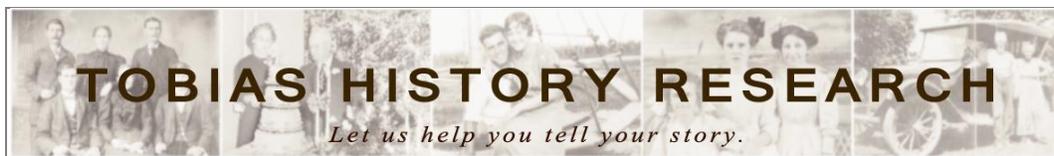
Although the two churches had no significant disagreement on points of theology, all property belonging to Presbyterians was declared forfeited to the Church of England unless the Presbyterians agreed to submit to a system incorporating bishops. Between 1783 and 1812, about 100,000 Ulster Scots left for North America. The peak emigration years were from 1815 to 1845, when about 500,000 Scotch-Irish left Ireland.

*“Many of the Antrim Ireland leases having fallen due in 1772, the tenants, all Protestants, were at once a whole countryside, driven from their habitations, and saw their farms, which these sturdy Scots had in five generations reclaimed from the wilderness Antrim, let by auction to the highest bidder, 100,000 pounds was asked in addition to the rents from the Protestants, they offered rent and interest on the 100,000 pounds which was refused. The most substantial of the expelled, gathered their effects and sailed to join their countrymen in the New World, where the Scotch-Irish became known as the most bitter secessionists from England.”*

The Scotch-Irish Presbyterians left Ulster as a result of neo-mercantilist British economic policy in the region, requirements that they pay 10% of their income to the Anglican Church, ongoing friction with their Catholic Irish neighbors, and greater economic opportunity in the New World. The Church of England (in Northern

Ireland) would not allow any other Protestant church members any legal rights to perform marriages, and they could hold no civil responsibilities above constable.

As well, a famine from December of 1739-1741 caused the deaths of many Irish people, those that survived barely did so. A huge freeze continued for 18 months, all major rivers were ice bound and nothing grew. Disease spread due



to starvation, Typhus, Dysentery, and Fevers. Those that were well enough to travel, went abroad to survive.

Although the Scotch-Irish settled throughout the colonies, they concentrated most heavily in Pennsylvania. Some of the main ports of entry for the Scotch-Irish immigrants were Philadelphia, which welcomed almost 50 percent of them; New York, to which about 20 percent came; and Charleston, S.C. which carried about 20 percent. The rest were scattered over smaller ports of entry. The McKnights arrived in Philadelphia. The Gardners, Weirs and McCulloughs all arrived in Charleston.

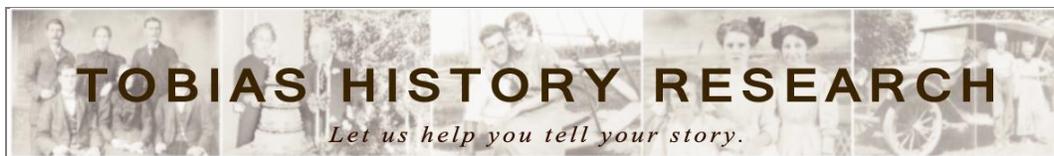
### **A Leader of Scotch-Irish Presbyterian Covenanters**

The Reverend William Martin (1729-1806) came to Chester County, South Carolina around 1772 from County Antrim, Ireland. William Martin was born at Ballyspollum, near Ballykelly, County Londonderry, Ireland on 16 May 1729. On 2 July 1757, he was ordained a Covenanter minister in an open air service held at The Vow, between Ballymoney and Kilrea, County Antrim. As the only Covenanter minister in Antrim and Down, the two counties became his parish and Rev. Martin, had supervisory responsibility for Covenanter groups at Ballymoney, Dervock, Cloughmills, Leighmore and Cullybackey.

Martin was vocal in his opposition to the Anglican Church authorities who openly discriminated against the Presbyterians. The oppressed Presbyterians were subjected to excessive rent demands and when payment could not be made, the tenants were evicted. During this period, agents representing South Carolina offered a bounty to settlers, inspiring many poor and oppressed Scots-Irish to migrate there. It was during this time that Rev. Martin "received a call to Rocky Creek", a small settlement in South Carolina.

In 1772, a total of 4671 families responded to Rev. Martin's call to South Carolina and around twelve hundred Covenanters and others, including Roman Catholics, left Ulster under his leadership. A total of 5 ships took the emigrants to the New Country.

1. "James and Mary", mastered (captained) by John Workman, sailed from Larne, Ireland 25 Aug. 1772.
2. "Lord Dulunce" Mastered by James Gillis, sailed from Larne, Ireland, 4 Oct 1772.
3. "Pennsylvania Farmer" mastered by. C. Robinson, sailed from Belfast 16 Oct. 1772.
4. "Hopewell" mastered by J. Ash, sailed from Belfast, 19 Oct. 1772.
5. "Free Mason" mastered by John Semple, sailed from Newry, 27 Oct. 1772.



Those sailing on these five ships were parishioners or friends of parishioners of the Rev. William Martin. His ships were filled with people from the following County Antrim villages: Ballymoney (where Rev. Martin served), Ballymena, Kellswater and Vow, all in County Antrim, Northern Ireland. These Scotch-Irish Presbyterian Covenanters settled at Fishing Creek, South Carolina in 1772.

Headed by Rev. William Martin, they came from Ballymoney, County Antrim, Ireland and had intended to land at Cape Cod, but were driven out of their course by a severe storm and landed on the coast of South Carolina. In this company headed by Reverend William Martin were the Weirs, the Millers (who intermarried with the McKnights in Washington County, Indiana) and other families.

Among the passengers on the "Lord Dulunce" was the Weir family, Thomas and sons David, Thomas, John. The Gardners and Weirs arrived in Charleston later, on other ships.

### **Settlement in South Carolina**

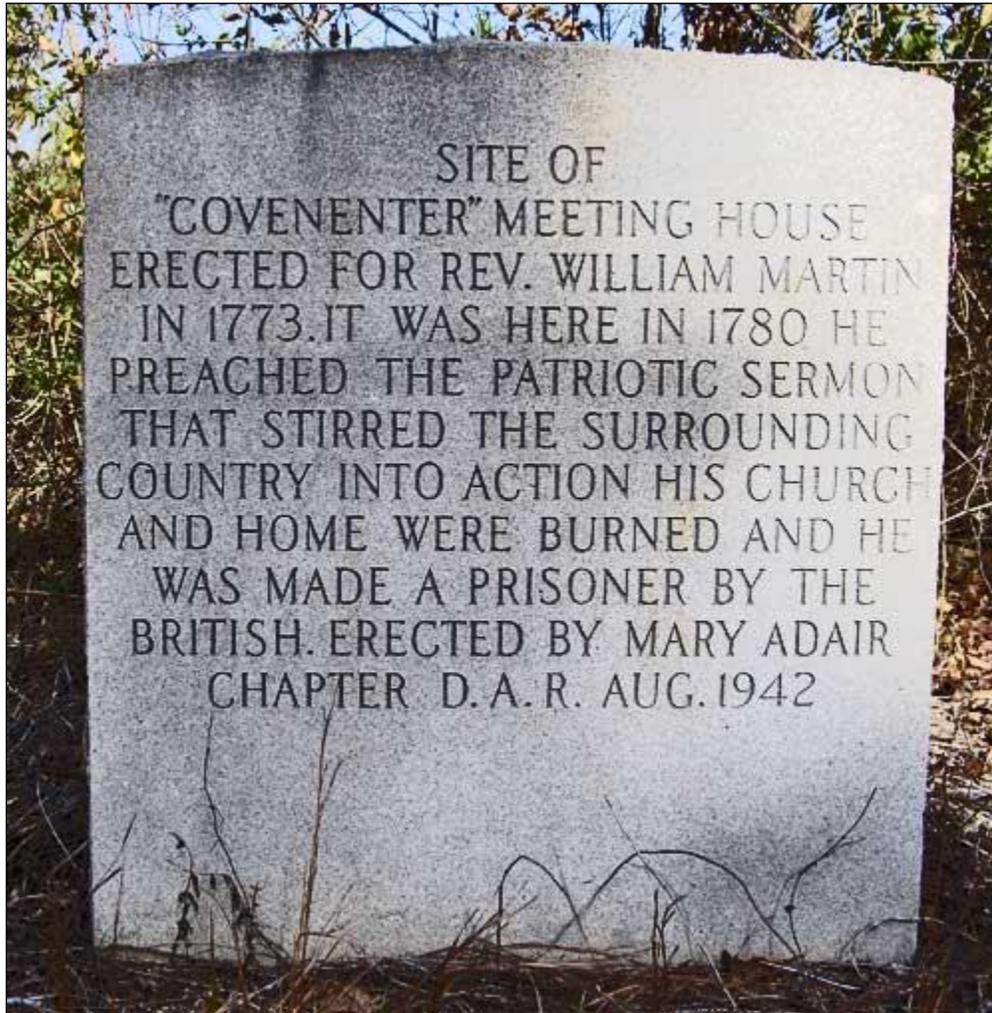
In order to help settle unoccupied lands the General Assembly of the Colony of South Carolina provided financial aid to encourage the immigration of poor Protestants from Europe.

As early as 1730, "poor Protestants" were given land if they settled it as provisioned in *The Bounty Act*. The grantees were required to clear and cultivate the land at the rate of at least 3 acres per year for each 100 acres of land granted. After two years, the land owner was required to pay 4 shillings per 100 acres quit rent (essentially land taxes). The amount of land granted was 100 acres for the head of the household and 50 acres for each dependent (wife and children under 15). Although the land was free there were significant fees to be paid for surveys and other legal matters. However, the Governor could and often did waive or otherwise pay these fees for poor immigrants.

The Weirs arrived in Charleston, South Carolina in January, 1773 and settled in Chester County near Fishing Creek. The Gardners arrived sometime between 1790 and 1800 and settled in the same area. The McCulloughs arrived after 1800. Although the three families did not arrive together, they settled in South Carolina on lands near or adjoining each other.

All three families appear on census and land records for Chester County by 1810. The Gardners and Weirs migrated to Washington and Scott Counties, Indiana sometime between 1813 and 1818. The McCulloughs migrated to Scott County around the same time. All three families (and the McKnights) appear on census records for those counties by 1820.

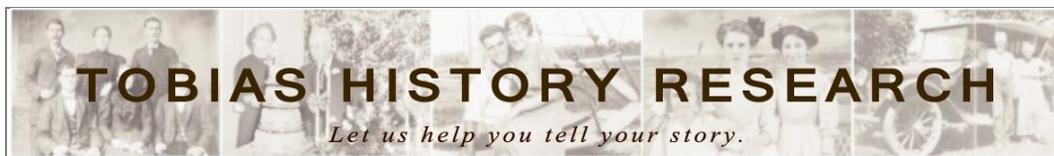
At first, Rev. Martin preached in the Union church of various Presbyterian sects built by the early settlers on Rocky Mount Road, but in 1774, the Conventer congregation withdrew and erected their own log church on the dividing ridge between Great Falls and Little Rocky Creek.



Historic Marker. Chester County, South Carolina. Located 34.608171 -81.00138  
Covenanter Church (approx. 2 mi. east of Catholic Church, on hill near "Rocky Mount  
road", near intersection, about 1/2 mile from Rossville).

George Howe, in his History of the Presbyterian Church in South Carolina,  
writes:

*"William Martin and his Covenanters had ill getting their land, they expected to settle down all close together, but they had to scatter and select land a considerable distance from each other, they were entitled to bounty, one hundred acres for each head of family and fifty to each member, those who had means bought from other settlers.*



*Fishing Creek is a settlement about 15 miles long and 4 miles wide, lying along Fishing Creek, in Chester County, South Carolina, all historic ground; hardly an acre but had been the scene of some interesting Revolutionary event; Rock Creek, Catawba River, and Fishing Creek are there.*

*The county is rolling, beautiful to the eye, with a general atmosphere of peace and plenty. On every side are comfortable homes and well-cultivated farms, the land appears to be good cotton land, which is the chief farming industry. The old church and graveyards are many. Revolutionary events crowd thick along Fishing Creek; here is "Cornwallis Road"; there is where Tarleton defeated the Americans; here is a tree on which a Tory was hung . . ."*

Immigration of Ulster Scots to South Carolina flourished for other reasons. Ulster province imported most of its flax (used in Northern Ireland textile/linen mills) from the Carolinas. Cargo ships would off-load their shipment of flax and take on immigrant passengers, to make a little extra money on the return trip to America.

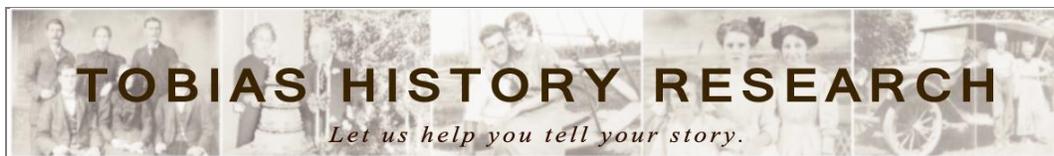
Once arrived in Charleston, the Scotch-Irish were allocated land in the unsettled, frontier "Back Country". The colonial government used these immigrants as "human shields", settling them in the Back Country to absorb attacks from Indians, French or the Spanish, thus protecting inland plantations and colonists. As well, they took advantage of the newly-arrived immigrants' anti-English sentiments and enlisted them in the colonial army, often sending them on the most dangerous campaigns.

## **Migration to Indiana**

### **The Beech Grove Presbyterian Church**

This church and cemetery is centrally located near (old) Franklin Township and New Philadelphia, Indiana. The land surrounding this church once belonged to the Gardners and Weirs, where they originally settled in Washington County in the early 1800s. Approximately 100-150 Gardners and Weirs (and related families) from the early 1800s to the early 1900s are buried in this church cemetery. This was their community church. It served as a meeting hall, school, place of worship and a general gathering place for the Gardner and Weir families.

The history of the Beech Grove Presbyterian Church begins with the organization of the Franklin Church located 5 miles northeast of Salem, Indiana. It seems there had been a division of the Salem Church and the branch church at Franklin was organized. The original deed was made and



house built with the understanding that all religious denominations would use it but the Presbyterians would have preference of the day. The first sermon was preached in the log house by Reverend William Martin in 1820, the same Rev. Martin who helped the Ulster Scots settle in Fishing Creek, Chester County, South Carolina.

When the Presbyterians established a church at New Philadelphia, Indiana they moved there, and later to Beech Grove. The Old School Beech Grove Church was organized in 1840. Services were probably held in the old log schoolhouse that stood where the cemetery is now located. The land where the church now stands was deeded to the New Philadelphia Congregation of the Old School Presbyterian Church by James B. Huston and Mary Ann Huston, 01 Sep 1851.

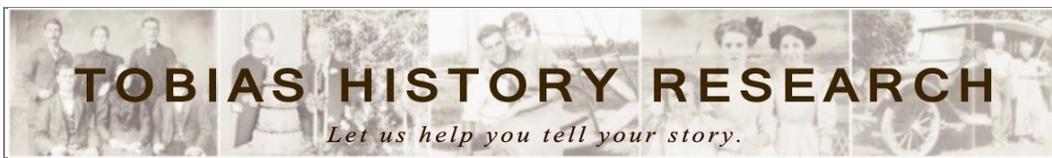
The present building was erected in 1914. Membership diminished as young people moved away until it was necessary to close the church in September 1971. The building was deeded to the Cemetery association. Records from 1873 on are in the archives at Hanover College, in Madison, Indiana.

## **Conclusions**

Throughout my research, I have found several references to James T. and (son) George Gardner as “Covenanters” and “Seceders”. The Reverend William Martin lead five ships of Scotch-Irish Presbyterian Covenanter immigrants to American. He not only settled with his parish in Chester County, South Carolina but also relocated with them to southern Indiana. Martin preached the inaugural sermon at the Beech Grove Presbyterian Church in Washington County, Indiana. Multiple generations of Gardner sons were named in honor of Rev. Martin (e.g. George Martin Gardner, Robert Martin Gardner, William Martin Gardner), I deduce that the Gardners were followers of this faith and that their history and experience in Scotland, Ireland and immigration to America will mirror that of the Weirs and other members of the Rev. Martin group.

## **Resources**

1. Scots-Irish in Colonial America by Kyle J. Betit (originally published in The Irish At Home and Abroad journal of Irish genealogy and heritage (volume 2 #1, 1994/1995) - [www.irishtimes.com/ancestor/magazine/articles/iha\\_scotsus1.htm](http://www.irishtimes.com/ancestor/magazine/articles/iha_scotsus1.htm)
2. The 1718 Migration: The Scotch-Irish Migration to the New World - <http://www.1718migration.org.uk/>
3. The Reverend William Martin - [http://boydroots.net/si\\_martin.html](http://boydroots.net/si_martin.html)
4. The Scotch-Irish Migration to South Carolina, 1772 by Jean Stephenson. (Rev. William Martin and His Five Shiploads of Settlers), Washington, DC, 1971, reprinted: Clearfield Company (General Publishing Co.)



Baltimore, MD 1999 - 2008, ISBN-13:978-0-8063-4832-2 and ISBN-10: 0-8063-4832-1.

5. Chester County, South Carolina Genealogy - [https://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Chester\\_County,\\_South\\_Carolina\\_Genealogy](https://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Chester_County,_South_Carolina_Genealogy)
6. Chester County Marriages, 1778-1879, Implied in Chester County, S.C. Probate and Equity Records by Barbara R. Langdon.
7. Chester County Historical Museum - <http://www.chestercounty.org/Visitors/Museums.aspx>
8. William Martin at FindaGrave - <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=41327195>
9. Beech Grove Cemetery and Church in Franklin, Washington County, Indiana - <http://www.beechgrovewashingtoncounty.com/>